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**Meeting:** Executive  
**Date:** 18 March 2014  
**Subject:** Leisure Strategy Adoption  
**Report of:** Cllr Brian Spurr, Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Services  
**Summary:** To adopt the Leisure Strategy, Chapters 1, 2 and 3, as Technical Guidance to inform the emerging Development Strategy.

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Advising Officer: Marcel Coiffait, Director of Community Services

Contact Officer: Lisa White, Strategy and Policy Manager

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Executive

Key Decision Yes

Reason for urgency/  
exemption from call-in  
(if appropriate) Not applicable.

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Council Priorities:**

The Leisure Facilities Strategy will support the following Council priorities;

- Enhancing Central Bedfordshire – creating jobs, managing growth, protecting our countryside and enabling businesses to grow.
- Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable.
- Great universal services – bins, leisure and libraries.
- Value for money – freezing council tax.

The Leisure Strategy will support the target to ensure the number of adults in Central Bedfordshire taking part in sport and physical activity remains above the national average.

### **Financial:**

1. None arising directly from this report.
2. The Leisure Strategy will be used to guide investment priorities including CBC capital investment for sites and facilities within the Council's ownership. In addition, the capital programme, approved at Executive in February 2013, includes funds for Leisure Strategy Implementation.

3. The Leisure Strategy will provide the evidence base required to secure both Section 106 contributions and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), and the respective chapter action plans will also identify priorities for use of these contributions once secured.

**Legal:**

4. Not applicable.

**Risk Management:**

5. The following risks have been identified, which are considered in more detail below:
  - Failure to deliver the Council's priorities.
  - Reputational risks.
  - Risk to customer satisfaction.
6. The strategy identifies significant facility requirements in both quantity and quality terms. The cost of addressing these requirements is considerable. Central Bedfordshire Council's role in the delivery of these requirements is primarily as the provider of Planning policy to secure new/improved facilities or developer contributions required to mitigate the impact of new development. CBC also has a delivery role relevant to the facilities within its ownership, together with a facilitation role in advising asset owners regarding external funding to assist them in the delivery of provision within their ownership.
7. The pre submission Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire establishes the requirement to provide good quality, accessible sport, leisure and open space facilities. The Leisure Strategy sets standards and facility requirements which seek to address the needs identified for each type of facility. The Strategy has been developed in accordance with the procedures required for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) however, until the Development Strategy is adopted the Leisure Strategy can only be adopted as Technical Guidance for Development Management purposes and will attract some weight in decisions reached on planning applications.

**Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

8. Not applicable.

**Equalities/Human Rights:**

9. Public authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
10. The Leisure Strategy aims to promote equality of opportunity, and make sport and physical activity a regular part of life for all.

**Public Health:**

11. Leisure facilities are a key community health resource. The Leisure Strategy aims to ensure there are sustainable and high quality sport, leisure and open space facilities across the Council's area which allow local communities to engage in regular physical activity to help prevent ill health, generate long term improvements in overall levels of health and wellbeing and thereby reduce the costs to society for the NHS and social care.

**Community Safety:**

12. Under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act the Council has a statutory duty to do all that is reasonable to prevent crime and disorder within its areas. Leisure facilities and the activities that they offer provide positive opportunities, particularly to young people, who may otherwise engage in activities that may be considered criminal or anti-social.
13. The siting and design process for future leisure facilities will incorporate an assessment of the potential community safety implications generated by the facility.

**Sustainability:**

14. The Leisure Strategy will seek to provide or facilitate new or improved facilities through the planning process, so that our customers participate in sport, recreation and physical activity through a network of good quality accessible and readily available sport, leisure and open space facilities, reducing the need for customers to travel to other local authority areas to participate in these activities.
15. New leisure facilities will, as far as economically practicable, be designed to be as energy efficient as possible.
16. The strategy also identifies standards for informal open space and country parks which will help protect the natural environment, support biodiversity and mitigate the impact of climate change.

**Procurement:**

17. Procurement of consultants to support CBC in developing the Leisure Strategy was undertaken via a Sport England framework compliant with CBC procurement rules.

### **Overview and Scrutiny:**

18. The Leisure Strategy was considered by the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 January 2014. The Committee agreed the recommendations be provided to Executive:
1. following formal consultation required for adoption as Technical Guidance, approve the minor amendments to the adopted Leisure Strategy Chapter 1: the Leisure Facilities Strategy;
  2. note the comments of the Committee in relation to the process and proposed policy standards and facility recommendations of the draft Leisure Strategy, Chapters 2 and 3. Minute SCOSC/13/102 is attached at Appendix C; and
  3. adopt the Leisure Strategy (Chapters 1, 2 and 3) for Central Bedfordshire and as Technical Guidance for development management purposes.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

#### **The Executive is asked to:**

- 1. approve the minor amendments to the adopted Leisure Strategy Chapter 1: the Leisure Facilities Strategy, following formal consultation, as required for adoption as Technical Guidance;**
- 2. note the process and proposed policy standards and facility recommendations of the Leisure Strategy, Chapters 2 and 3; and**
- 3. adopt the Leisure Strategy (Chapters 1, 2 and 3) for Central Bedfordshire and as Technical Guidance for development management purposes.**

*Reason for Recommendations:* To provide comprehensive planning policy guidance on the provision of indoor and outdoor sports and leisure facilities to inform the emerging Development Strategy.

### **Executive Summary**

19. The Leisure Strategy is primarily a Planning policy document which will provide both the evidence base and policy standards to secure the new/improved indoor and outdoor sports and recreational open space facilities which are required to mitigate the additional demand generated by new housing development and the resulting increased population.
20. The Strategy identifies facility requirements which may be provided directly by new development or funded via developer contributions, CIL or external funding sources. For facilities within Central Bedfordshire Council's ownership, the Strategy will guide the council's capital investment.

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| <p>21. In addition, the facility assessment and identification of need in the Strategy can be used by facility providers such as town and parish councils, countryside organisations, sports clubs etc. as evidence to assist them in securing external funding to improve/deliver the facilities within their ownership, or to help deliver their aims and objectives concerning indoor sports provision / improvement.</p> |
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### **Planning Status, Structure and Scope**

22. The Leisure Strategy comprises four chapters, Chapters 1, 2 and 3 are facility-based chapters which examine a range of indoor, built facilities, recreational open spaces and outdoor playing pitches; and Chapter 4 seeks to marry the facilities currently available, and those identified as being required, with the types of physical activities needed to support Central Bedfordshire's residents in pursuing healthy, active lifestyles now and in the future.
23. Chapter 4: The Physical Activity Strategy was adopted by Executive in September 2013 and does not form part of the Leisure Strategy Technical Guidance document.

### **Planning Status**

24. The Leisure Strategy provides a streamlined and comprehensive guide to the provision of facilities across CBC. It will replace a number of older documents produced by the former legacy Local Authorities. At the project initiation it was envisaged that the strategy would be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and tied in with the new planning framework for the area which would also have been updated. The new Development Strategy is however, still currently in preparation. This means that the relevant chapters of the Leisure Strategy cannot yet be adopted as SPD. The strategy will not hold the same weight as adopted standards however, they will hold some weight if adopted as interim Technical Guidance which will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. As the strategy has been produced in accordance with the requirements for SPD it can become SPD once the Development Strategy has been adopted.

### **Structure and Scope**

25. The Leisure Strategy has been developed on a phased basis and the status of the respective chapters is as follows:

**Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy** (indoor sport and leisure centres, comprising a range of sport and leisure activities)

- Approved by Executive on 8 January 2013 as the Leisure Facilities Strategy for Central Bedfordshire.
- Chapter 1 has been subject to the formal consultation required for its adoption as Technical Guidance for planning purposes and the resulting minor amendments have been included.

**Chapter 2: Recreation and Open Space Strategy** (a defined range of green spaces, providing formal and informal recreational facilities)

- Chapter 2 has been subject to the formal consultation required for its adoption as the Recreation and Open Space Strategy for Central Bedfordshire and Technical Guidance for planning purposes.

**Chapter 3: Playing Pitch Strategy** (outdoor formal, grass and artificially-surfaced sports playing pitches).

- Chapter 3 has been subject to the formal consultation required for its adoption as the Playing Pitch Strategy for Central Bedfordshire and Technical Guidance for planning purposes.

26. The consultation comments for Chapters 1, 2 and 3 are detailed in the Consultation Responses Statement which is available on the council's web site.

## **Methodology**

27. Each chapter of the Leisure Strategy has undergone the following stages of development:

### **Stage 1 Audit & Assessment:**

- The relevant methodology and research tools for each chapter, directed the gathering of facility evidence from existing data and new research.
- Population growth and housing growth forecasts and other socio economic and demographic data was used to assess the potential impacts of growth on each of the facilities.
- Facility inspections and stakeholder feedback were combined with the audit evidence to detail the current and future provision required to meet the sport, leisure and open space needs of Central Bedfordshire residents.

### **Evidence Gathering and Consultation:**

At each stage of the process, a range of consultees were invited to comment on current and future requirements as set out in the Communications Plan, these included:

- national and local organisations
- governing bodies of sport
- town and parish councils
- leisure operators
- facility users
- sports clubs.

## **Stage 2 Issues & Options:**

- From the audit and assessment of each chapter the key issues affecting provision now and in the future were identified.
- These key issues and a range of options to address the issues were presented for consultation.

In addition to other consultations, workshops were held to refine the preferred options with CBC Members in April 2012 and June 2013.

## **Stage 3 Strategy:**

- The preferred options were identified and developed into policies on provision standards and future facility requirements.

## **Stage 4 Adoption:**

- Chapters 1, 2 and 3 have undergone the formal consultation required for Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) adoption, however, until the Development Strategy is adopted, they can only be adopted as Technical Guidance which will attract some weight in decisions reached on planning applications.

## **Stage 5 Action Plans:**

- Following adoption by Executive, an action plan will be developed for each chapter, detailing the priorities for delivery of the facility requirements identified.

## **Policy Standards and Facility Requirements**

28. The Leisure Strategy Summary Document (Appendix A) sets out the policy standards and facility priorities for each chapter. The main themes can be summarised as follows:

### **Chapter 1: the Leisure Facilities Strategy**

Chapter 1 was adopted by Executive in January 2013. Further consultation has confirmed the strategic priorities approved at that time; these can be found in Appendix A, page 21.

## 29. **Chapter 2: the Recreation and Open Space Strategy**

Chapter 2 sets standards for provision of new or improved recreational open space facilities within the nine open space typologies, the standards for each open space type are detailed in Appendix A, page 21. The standards in order of application are:

- Accessibility - consultation established Central Bedfordshire residents' expected travel times to each open space type.
- Quantity – to support the accessibility standards, the quantity standard was calculated, providing a quantity of provision per 1,000 people required to meet each accessibility standard.
- Quality - to ensure the content and quality of provision meets customer expectations, quality criteria is provided for each open space type.

Following approval of the open space standards, the recreation and open space Graphical Information System (GIS) layer will be finalised to show all sites with their respective accessibility catchments. In addition, the standards for each open space type will be calculated for each parish in Central Bedfordshire and these will be detailed in the Parish Schedules. An example of a parish schedule is attached at Appendix B. Further consultation with facility providers will be undertaken to establish the local delivery priorities which will inform the action plan and the securing of new facilities and s106 developer contributions.

## 30. **Chapter 3: the Playing Pitch Strategy**

Chapter 3 has been developed using the Sport England 'Towards a Level Playing Field: A Manual for the Production of a Playing Pitch Strategy (2003)' guidance, together with the emerging revised methodology set out in Sport England's Playing Pitch Guidance (due for publication in 2014).

The guidance places greater emphasis on:

- site specific issues which include assessing the quality of facilities and recording the availability of each pitch;
- involving National Governing Bodies of Sport and Sport England, to ensure that local priorities are matched with regional issues and priorities; and
- rather than setting a quantity standard for outdoor sports provision, area and sport specific requirements are detailed which identify priorities reflecting both the planning policy requirements and those of the individual sports clubs.



31. The overarching priorities for the future delivery of sports pitch facilities (Appendix A, from page 23) across Central Bedfordshire are:
- Ensure that there are enough facilities to meet current and future demand.
  - Ensure that facilities are of appropriate quality to meet current and future demand.
  - Promote increased participation and sustainable club development.
32. The priorities for each sport are shown in the Leisure Strategy Document in Appendix A (from page 49), the main themes can be summarised as follows:
- Protect all current facilities.
  - Increase the amount of pitches available (especially football).
  - Ensure the amount or quality of facilities is not limiting participation.
  - Monitor supply, demand and participation to ensure facilities keep pace with population growth.
  - Ensure quality of existing facilities can accommodate demand – quality improvements.
  - Support initiatives which encourage participation.
  - Support dual use of school facilities and partnerships where appropriate.

### **Consultation Issues**

33. The Leisure Strategy Chapters 1, 2 and 3 were published for six weeks consultation in October/November 2013 in accordance with the requirements for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The responses to the consultation have been assessed and responded to in the Consultation Responses Statement which is published on the council's web site.
34. The consultation responses revealed a number of key themes, these can be summarised as:
- The production of a leisure strategy comprising the range of indoor and outdoor facilities was welcomed.
  - There is strong support for the overarching aims and objectives of the strategy from respondents to the online survey.
  - Consultees accepted the robust methodologies employed and the setting of standards for open space provision.
  - The reliance upon school pitch facilities, and the securing of community use was a key issue.
  - Adoption of the Leisure Strategy as a Supplementary Planning Document was questioned as the Development Strategy adoption has been delayed.

### **Conclusion and Next Steps**

35. Following consideration by Executive, further consultation will be undertaken with asset owners and stakeholders to develop individual Chapter Actions Plans which will inform CIL and the Planning Obligations Strategy.

**Appendices:**

Appendix A: Leisure Strategy Technical Guidance Summary Document

Appendix B: Parish Schedules example

Appendix C: Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee Minute  
SCOSC/13/102 – Leisure Strategy Adoption

**Background papers and their location:** (open to public inspection)

Leisure Strategy Chapters 1, 2 and 3, the Leisure Strategy Summary Document and the Consultation Responses Statement can be found at [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)